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SPRING SPRINKLERS
Did you know that the best time of day to water plants is typically early in the morning, just after sunrise? This timing allows the water to soak into the soil before the heat of the day causes it to evaporate. This Make Your Life Better Hack brought to you by the Exchange

Three Garden Box Mistakes That Are Easy to Fix

A raised bed is an investment. Wood, soil, time, water, and a fence around it to keep the deer out runs $200 to $500 to set up and another $50 to $100 a year to maintain. For that money, the bed should be earning back as much produce as it can. Most local raised beds work at about half capacity because of three habits that are easy to change.

Mistake 1: Leaving the bed bare from October through April
After the last tomato comes off the vine, most home gardeners pull the plants and let the bed sit. Empty soil bakes in the late-summer sun, leaches nutrients through the wet fall, and compacts under snow. The bed comes back in spring lower in nutrients, weaker in structure, and ready for another bag of soil and another bag of fertilizer.
The fix is a cover crop. Hairy vetch and Austrian winter peas fix nitrogen the bed can use the following spring. Winter rye and oats add organic matter and prevent erosion. Seed in late August or early September after summer crops finish, water it in, let it grow through fall, and terminate it in early spring before planting. WSU Extension publishes a free fact sheet specifically for this region ("Cover Crops for Home Gardens East of the Cascades," publication FS117E) and a companion guide on planting and termination methods (FS119E), both downloadable from pubs.extension.wsu.edu. The Spokane County Master Gardener Plant Clinic at 222 N. Havana Street takes species and seed-source questions for free at 509-904-0747, open March through October (Monday to Thursday 9am to 3pm, Friday 9am to 1pm). Leaving the bed empty all winter is the most common avoidable mistake in this region, and the fix takes about an hour in early September.

Mistake 2: Growing one crop per bed per year
The standard approach is to plant tomatoes in May, harvest through August, and call it a season. That's one crop in a bed that could be growing three.
Cool-season crops thrive in Eastern Washington spring and fall but die in midsummer heat. Warm-season crops want July and August but won't survive a frost on either end. Stack them. Plant spinach, lettuce, peas, and radishes in late March or early April. Pull them in early June and replace with tomatoes, peppers, and basil. After the first hard frost takes the summer crops, plant a second round of cool-season greens (spinach, kale, arugula) for an October and November harvest. Or plant a cover crop. Either way, the bed produces continuously instead of working four months out of twelve.
The numbers that matter for Spokane County: peas and spinach in the ground around late March if the soil is workable, tomato and pepper transplants in around June 5 (May 15 is the average last frost per WSU, but soil temperature matters more for these crops than the calendar), fall greens seeded around August 1, cover crop seeded by September 15. A bed running on this schedule produces twice or more what a single-crop bed produces, on the same water and the same soil amendments.

Mistake 3: Treating containers like miniature raised beds
This one trips people up because containers look like small versions of garden boxes. They're not. A container in full Eastern Washington sun is essentially a solar oven with a plant in it. Black plastic pots in direct July sun routinely push soil temperatures past 130 degrees, which cooks roots, locks up nutrients, and kills the plant from the inside out before the leaves show any sign of trouble.
Three things help. Container size matters more than people think: anything under five gallons doesn't survive a real heat wave with most vegetables, and ten to fifteen gallons is a more honest minimum for tomatoes and peppers. Color matters: light-colored or terra cotta containers run noticeably cooler than black plastic, and a gardener who can't replace the pot can wrap the dark side in light cloth or shade it with a board during the hottest part of the day. And mulching matters. The bare soil surface in a container loses water to evaporation faster than an in-ground bed because the entire pot is exposed to wind and sun. A two-inch layer of bark, straw, or even shredded leaves cuts evaporation roughly in half and keeps the soil temperature down.
Watering more is the standard advice and it's not wrong, but it's incomplete. The container that's overheating doesn't have a water problem. It has a thermal problem. Fix the thermal problem and the water problem mostly fixes itself.

The Takeaway
Raised beds and containers reward attention more than they reward expense. The bed that gets a cover crop in September, three plantings between March and October, and shade for its containers in July outproduces the bed that gets twice the fertilizer and a fancy automatic watering kit. Most of what makes a productive home garden box happens in the things people skip.

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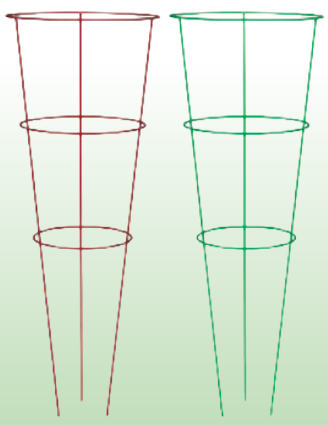

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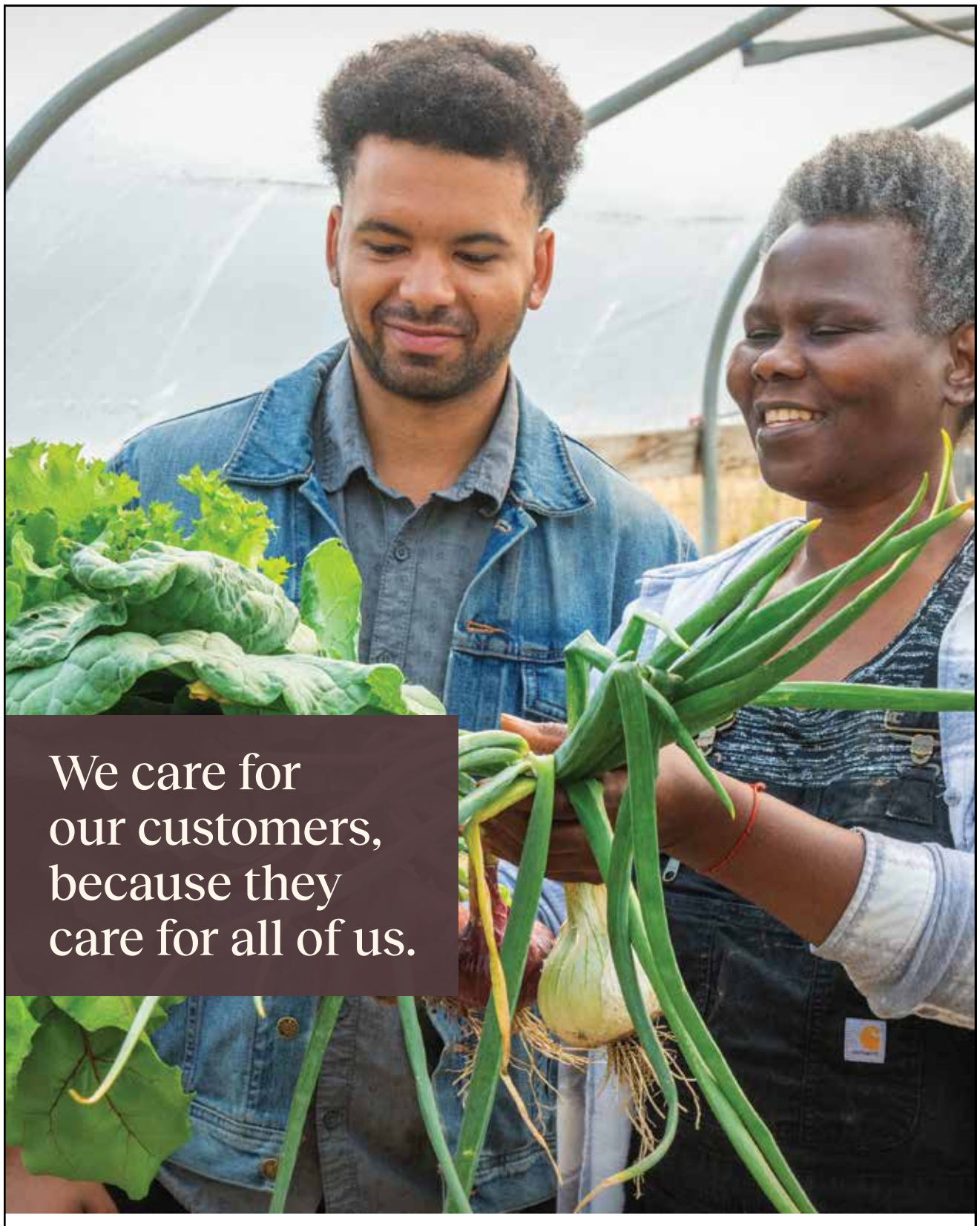

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Now is a good time to divide perennials that have grown too large for their space or if you want to move plants around your garden. Depending on the plant, there are several ways to do this job.

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Many insects and other small creatures are desirable to have in your garden. Take special care to provide food, shelter and water. Avoid using broad spectrum insecticides that kill even the good guys!

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
https//extentions.wsu.edu/spokane/master-gardener-program/home-lawn-and-garden/

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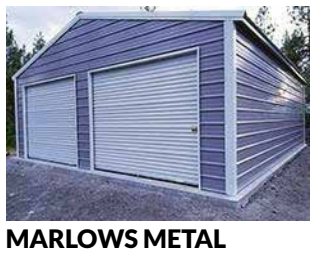

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Refinishing an Old Deck: When It's Worth It and When It Isn't

The deck out back has seen better days. The boards are gray where they used to be brown, a couple of them are cupping in ways that catch your shoe at the wrong angle, and one of the railing posts wobbles enough that you've started warning guests about it. There are three ways to deal with this, separated by a factor of ten in cost. Picking the right one depends on a fifteen-minute inspection that almost nobody does.

The Screwdriver Test

The decision starts under the deck, not on top of it. Grab a flathead screwdriver and a flashlight and crawl under there. Press the screwdriver into the joists, beams, and posts at the spots most likely to fail: the tops of joists where water sits, the ends where they meet the ledger or rim, the bottom six inches of any post in or near concrete, and the ledger board itself.

Healthy wood resists the screwdriver. You should have to lean on it to get the tip in even a quarter inch. Rotten wood lets the screwdriver sink in with light pressure, and the deeper it goes, the worse the news. A quarter inch of soft surface is manageable. An inch is a problem. Four inches and the joist is structural in name only.

Pay particular attention to the ledger. The board that bolts the deck to the house is the failure point in roughly nine out of ten catastrophic deck collapses, and it's the easiest spot for water to wick in undetected behind siding. Probe its full length. If the screwdriver finds soft wood at the ledger, stop reading articles and start calling contractors.

Path One: Refinish Only

If the framing tests solid and the boards are in reasonable shape (no cracks wider than a pencil, no significant cupping, no soft spots), the deck needs cosmetic work, not structural work. Clean the deck, sand or strip the old finish, fix minor issues, apply new stain and sealer.

Cost runs $3 to $8 per square foot professional, less DIY. A 200-square-foot deck lands between $600 and $1,600. Penetrating oil stain lasts two to four years. Solid stain lasts four to six years but eventually peels and requires full stripping when it does. This is the right answer for most decks under ten years old that have just been neglected.

Path Two: Keep the Frame, Replace the Boards

If the framing is solid but the boards are cracked, splintering, cupped, or rotted at fastener locations, the boards come off and new ones go on while the structure stays. This is called resurfacing, and it costs $15 to $50 per square foot. New pressure-treated boards land at the low end. Cedar runs mid-range. Composite (Trex, TimberTech) sits at the high end and adds another decade or two before you have to think about decking again.

This is also the right time to upgrade two cheap details. Joist tape keeps water from collecting between board and joist, which is where most rot starts. Hidden fasteners eliminate the screw holes that let water reach the joist tops in the first place. Both upgrades together extend deck life by ten years or more.

Path Three: Full Rebuild

If the screwdriver found soft wood in the framing (especially the ledger, multiple joists, or posts), the deck is past the point where surface work makes sense. Demolition runs $5 to $15 per square foot. Rebuild from scratch runs $30 to $60 per square foot. A 200-square-foot rebuild lands around $7,000 to $12,000 plus demolition.

The temptation is to patch a couple of joists and hope. The rule of thumb in the trade is that once 20 percent of a joist's width is rotted, it no longer meets code for span and load and needs to be replaced. By the time multiple joists test soft, the framing is approaching end-of-life as a system.

The Eastern Washington Wear Pattern

UV at our elevation is harsh. Stains rated for five years in Ohio fade to gray in three here. Freeze-thaw cycles work fasteners loose, and a sunny April day (40 degrees overnight, 70 by afternoon) wedges water into every crack the wood developed last summer. The first thing that fails on most decks in this region isn't the framing or the boards. It's the finish. Refinish on a four-year cycle in this climate instead of the six-year cycle the can recommends, and the deck underneath stays serviceable a decade longer.

The Actual Decision

Spend fifteen minutes under the deck before spending five thousand dollars on top of it. The screwdriver tells you which path to take. Refinishing a structurally compromised deck means you've thrown away the cost of the refinish and still own a dangerous deck. Tearing down a deck that just needed a refinish means you've thrown away thousands. Neither mistake is necessary.

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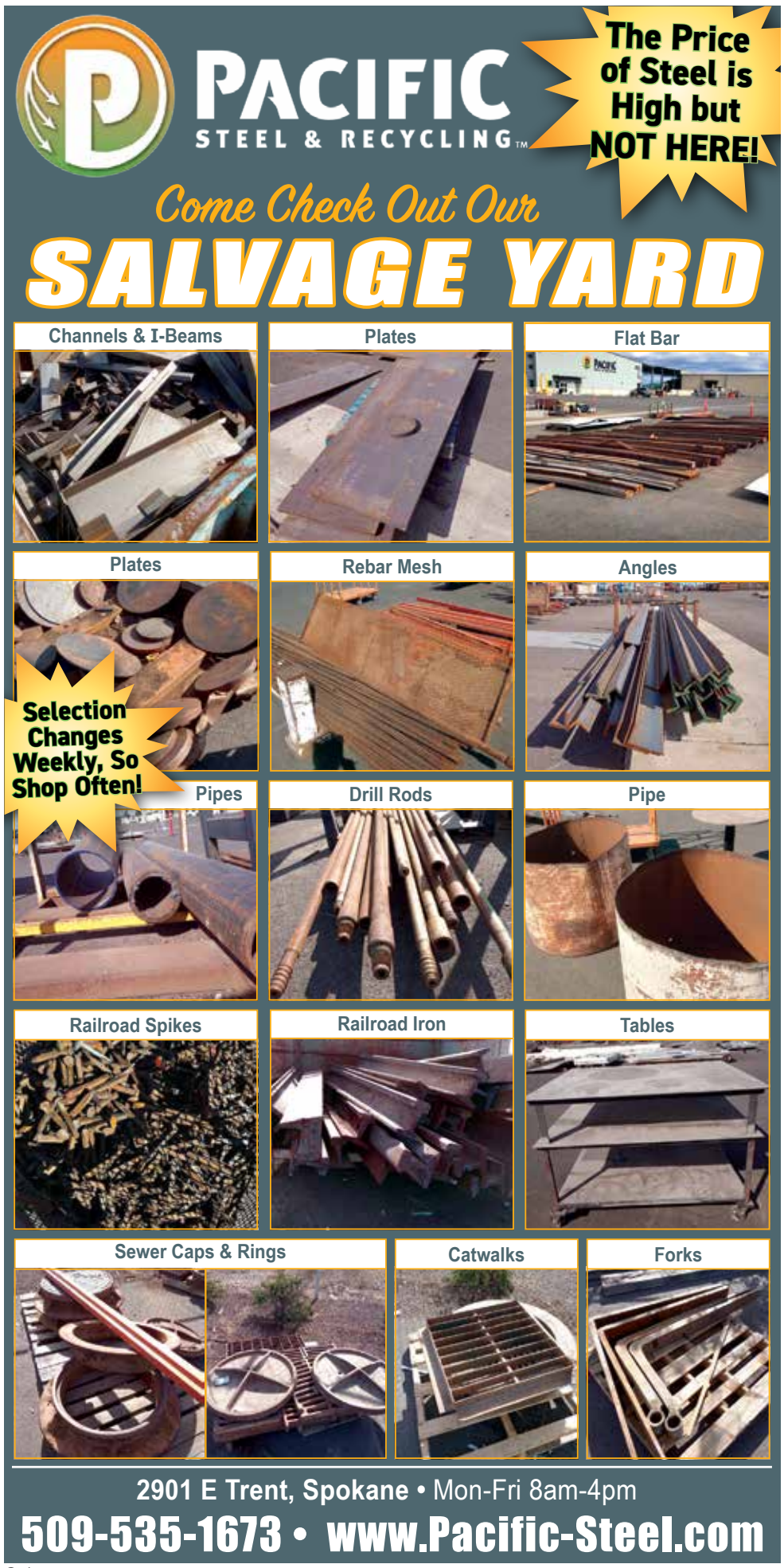

Why That $20 Hose Is About to Cost You $60

Let me paint you a picture, you're walking through your local big box store when suddenly you spot a brand spanking new 50' glorious green garden hose. And it's on sale for just $20! What a bargain, it's almost as if the store knew you needed to replace your old garden hose and they just happened to put this beauty in your path. I'll let you in on a little secret, the big box store did know you needed a new hose. How you ask? Well because they sold you the same 50' glorious green garden hose last spring, and if their calculations are right, then it's about time to replace last years hose.
That $20 great deal on a hose, isn't such a great deal when you remember that you can barely move the hose without it kinking, and undoing one kink just causes another one. Don't forget trying to get the fitting tight, no amount of force is going to stop the water from spraying out all around the hose at the spigot…it's just part of the charm.

What is the Right Hose For You?
Well that all depends on your needs, they are very different from watering a small flower bed, or if you have ½ acre of lawn to keep green. So instead lets talk about the materials, and you can decide what will fit your bill.

Material
Vinyl is cheap and it shows. It gets stiff in the cold, brittle in the sun, and develops a memory like a grudge: once it kinks, it kinks there forever. Reinforced vinyl with a mesh or cord layer holds up better. Rubber hoses… well they can weigh as much as a sack of wet cement but they last, sometimes for decades. Polyurethane is the newer middle ground, light enough to drag around without thinking, tough enough to handle the temperature swings we get out here.

Diameter
Most garden hoses are 5/8 inch inside. A 3/4 inch hose moves more water, which matters if you're filling stock tanks or running a sprinkler at the far end of a long line. For ordinary watering, 5/8 is plenty. The 1/2 inch hoses sold for $12 at the end-cap display are useful for filling a watering can and not much else.

Length
Longer is not better. Pressure drops the further water travels, and a 100-foot hose at the end of a marginal spigot will trickle when it should spray. Get the length you need and stop.

Fittings
The single best predictor of how long a hose will last. Brass couplings cost a couple of dollars more and outlive the hose. Plastic couplings strip, crack, and round off when you crank a wrench on them, which you will. If the package shows a brass-colored fitting, pick it up. If it feels suspiciously light, it's painted plastic, and you've been had.

Burst rating
The pressure the hose is rated to handle before it splits like a balloon. 350 psi is fine for normal use. 500 psi or higher is what you want for hot afternoons when the hose is sitting in the sun coiled up and pressurized, which is most of summer.

Warranty
A two-year warranty on a hose is the manufacturer admitting they expect it to fail. A lifetime warranty is the company having some faith in their product. Read the fine print, but a longer warranty generally means a better-made hose.

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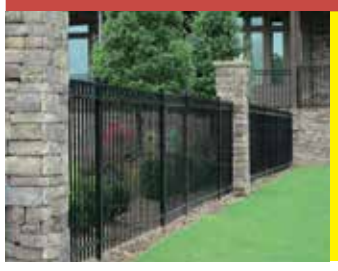
7'6" Black Grizzly Post..... $35.00

FORTRESS ORNAMENTAL STEEL



Beautiful and maintenance free.

4' x 8' Panel
5' x 8' Panel
6' x 8' Panel

10% OFF

SPLIT RAIL CEDAR

2-Rail..... $5.80 /ft
3-Rail..... $7.73 /ft

CONTINUOUS PANEL FENCING

48" TALL x 20' WIDE

4 - Rail..... $102.00
5 - Rail..... $120.00
6 - Rail..... $150.00
Clip (Weld-on or Screw-on)..... $0.68

TREATED WOOD POSTS

Idaho's Fencing Headquarters

4-5" x 7' Driver..... $10.99
5-6" x 7' Driver..... $14.50
4-5" x 8' Driver..... $15.00
5-6" x 10' Driver..... $29.00
5-6" x 12' Driver..... $30.00
4-1/2" x 16' Treated Half-Round..... $18.00

PREMIUM HEAVY DUTY T-POSTS

Premium 5'6" 1.33#..... $4.89
Premium 6' 1.33#..... $5.29
Premium 7' 1.33#..... $6.70
Premium 8' 1.33#..... $7.30
Premium 10' 1.33#..... $9.80

CHAIN LINK FENCING

10% OFF

Galvanized and Black

BARBED WIRE

COMMERCIAL 4pt 12.5ga..... $110.00

GAME AND GARDEN FENCING

7'6" x 100' Black Deer Netting..... $139.00
7'6" x 330' Black Deer Netting..... $310.00
6'6" x 165' Game Fence..... $195.00
6'6" x 330' Game Fence..... $390.00
8' x 330' Game Fence (6" Spacing)... $590.00

LIVESTOCK PANELS

50" x 16' Cattle Panel..... $30.00
48" x 16' Sheep & Goat Panel (4x4 squares)..... $40.00

HORSE SHELTERS 12x12

NOW AVAILABLE FOR $2,800.00!

While Supplies Last

All items limited to stock on hand, while supplies last - sale pricing not to be combined with installations. More inventory in stock.

OPEN MON - FRI: 8AM - 5PM • SAT: 8AM - 4PM • SUN: CLOSED

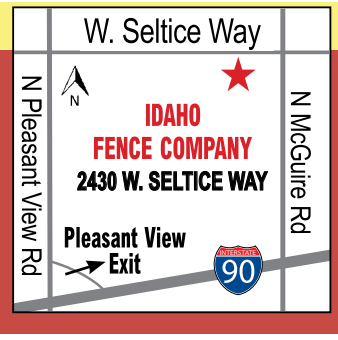
IDAHO FENCE

POST FALLS | (208) 687-2296

2430 W Seltice Way Post Falls, ID 83854

IdahoFence.com

SALE ENDS 5/30/26



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